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THE MADISON COUNTY CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION.

BY NORMAN G. FLAGG.

When Ninian Edwards, the first Governor of Illinois territory, issued the proclamation at Kaskaskia, September 14, 1812, which established the county of Madison and which "appointed the house of Thomas Kirkpatrick to be the seat of justice of said county," he little realized what a grand celebration he was making possible, to be participated in and witnessed by the citizenship of the county and State, a hundred years later. Could Gov. Edwards have arisen from his grave, in this year of our Lord, 1912, and have spent a day or two in the city which bears his name, during centennial week, September 14-21, what a stupendous contrast he would have found, as compared with the Madison County he then established.

To celebrate, fittingly, the one hundredth birthday of such a county was certainly a stupendous undertaking, but Madison County is well supplied with patriotism and public spirit. At great personal sacrifice a multitude of citizens bent to the task of preparation, and, filled with enthusiasm, they lent their energies, their talent, their time, and their means in generous abundance. Splendid executive management combining with efficient and willing workers, only one result was possible—a most successful celebration.

Looking back at only one month's distance from the events, and omitting all reference to all features which had no connection with the centennial idea—the county fair, the flower parade, and other interesting exhibits—several features stand out in perspective as of historical interest and importance.

First, the dedication of the centennial monument, erected by the State, attracted crowds from all portions of Illinois. The

chief executive and other State officers were present, also a regiment of the State militia. Addresses were given by the Governor and by Supreme Court Justice O. N. Carter, of Chicago. This monument is of Georgian marble, stands sixteen feet high, and is surmounted by a belted globe. Four allegorical figures occupy the four sides of the square shaft—Justice, Virtue, Learning and Plenty. On the monument is the inscription "Commemorating One Hundred Years of Progress." Immediately following the ceremony at the monument in the city park, a beautiful bronze tablet was unveiled in the courthouse by the Daughters of the American Revolution, of Madison County. This tablet is a memorial to the twenty-three Revolutionary soldiers who are buried in Madison County and whose names are inscribed on this most artistic piece of workmanship.

Much interest was shown by the visitors of centennial week in the extensive exhibit of historical matter, manuscripts, documents, Indian curios, pioneer relics, etc. Some six hundred square feet of showcase room were required to hold this exhibit, which was inspected by probably ten thousand interested and appreciative citizens of Illinois. So much appreciated was this historical exhibit, by those qualified to know its value, that a permanent Madison County historical museum is being strongly urged. To quote the suggestion of Miss Caroline M. McIlvane, librarian of the Chicago Historical Society: "The historical exhibit has been generally voted of such great educational value that it seems highly desirable that further opportunity be given to study it, especially to the teachers and pupils, who will next week be assembled in the schools. It is to be hoped that patriotic citizens, who have loaned these precious relics of the early days, will extend the courtesy and allow the exhibits to remain longer. As an inspiration to patriotism and good citizenship, the study of the simple manners and customs, the hardships and sacrifices of our ancestors can not be over estimated."

Centennial week in Madison County witnessed also the marking of the two spots of chief historical importance, in the county, of a century ago. During the entire week the stars and stripes waved over the site of the old frontier post, Fort Russell (1¼ miles northwest of Edwardsville), and over the site of Thomas Kirkpatrick's house, of 1812, (in the extreme northern part of Edwardsville). The latter spot was

designated by Gov. Edwards as the seat of justice of Madison County, and the former, Fort Russell, was Gov. Edwards' headquarters during the Indian troubles of 1812, 350 regulars being stationed there at one time. Therefore these two spots, historically speaking, were the points about which centered the entire "centennial idea," of Madison County. At each of these sites, a beautiful and appropriate ceremony of flag-raising, was witnessed by crowds of patriotic citizens. A year ago, probably a few dozen of Illinoisans knew the location of either of these interesting places, now, the site of each is known by thousands, and the day will soon come, we hope and believe, when something more substantial than flagpoles will mark these spots.

But the crowning feature of the centennial was the "Historical Pageant." Words can not convey the impression which this wonderful performance made upon those fortunate enough to hear and see it. Even the unfavorable weather did not prevent the pageant being a grand success. A novel idea in this section of the country, and acted by amateurs who gladly volunteered their services, the pageant was staged in the open air, with beautiful natural scenery and stage settings. Its general plan was to give a true series of Illinois historical scenes, including: The legend of the Piasa bird; the coming of Marquette; LaSalle and Tonti; Pontiac; the taking of Kaskaskia; scenes in old Edwardsville, illustrating the birth of the county, the first session of court, and the freeing of Gov. Coles' slaves; the assassination of Lovejoy; and finally, a tableau showing a volunteer camp of 1861, with war songs. To have witnessed this historical pageant was indeed an inspiration and an education, and to those who, with little opportunity for rehearsal, participated in the presentation of these beautiful scenes, great credit is due.

Centennial week closed with still another historical exhibit, a street parade of the "Monks of Cahokia," a mysterious order which is so completely wrapped in secrecy that even the membership of the order can not be ascertained; the only information obtainable about the monks is that they are sworn to work for the perpetual preservation of that famous archeological antiquity, Cahokia Mound, in Madison county. This spectacular street parade was the initial public appearance of the Monks of Cahokia, and it compared favorably with the Mardi

Gras of New Orleans, and the Veiled Prophet of St. Louis. The whole parade was charming in appearance, the costumes and floats were artistic and elaborate. Among other features were representations of the LaSalle expedition down the Illinois; of Indian braves and squaws; of the "Spirit of '76", accompanied by a fife and drum corps; of the "Pioneer days," showing a prairie schooner, scouts, Indian traders, etc.; of the modern "Political arena," exhibiting the donkey, elephant and bull moose, with a suffragette in evidence; and lastly, in the most honored place in the parade came a mammoth painting of the Cahokia Mound itself.

M. Kirk Coleman, a great-great grand son of Thomas J. Kirkpatrick was present at the anniversary and was shown a great deal of attention. He is a son of Rev. and Mrs. M. G. Coleman, of Taylorville, Illinois.

Thus closed the celebration of Madison county's one-hundredth birthday. Both to young and old, to the thousands who attended from far and near, it was an occasion of great interest and of great profit, and its pleasant memories will ever remain. By this celebration we become familiar with the county's history and learn the needs and duties of a better citizenship; a comparison of the present with the past, on occasions of this character, must stimulate every thinking person to greater endeavor and higher achievement. Pardonable, indeed, should be the pride felt by every public-spirited citizen of Madison County when viewing the complete success of this immense celebration. And when the anniversary of 2012 rolls around, when we of today shall hope to serve on the reception committee only, may the occasion be equally happy!